



The care exchange - Series 4 Episode 4: I get most of my success on a Sunday! Stephen Forster, The Care Social Network

Hosts: Pia Rathje-Burton and Wendy Adams

Pia 00:08

So here we go. Another episode of the care exchange, the Skills for Care podcast for managers and social care. I'm Pia Rathje-Burton

Wendy 00:15

And I'm Wendy Adams.

Pia 00:17

So in this episode, we're having a conversation with Steven Forster, Stephen is the founder and director of the Care Social Network, a care recruitment and retention consultancy. Steven started his career in social care in 2017, as a care assistant for a dom care company. He was later asked to help that company with their recruitment, and he later joined another dom care company as an HR manager. He then started the Care Social Network in 2020.

Wendy 00:44

We know that recruitment and retention can be extremely challenging for many managers in social care. Stephen has successfully recruited 1000s of staff in social care. So we decided to chat to Stephen today as we wanted to pick his brains about all things recruitment and retention.

01:00

So yeah, on the show.

Pia 01:10

Welcome, Stephen to the care exchange podcast. Thanks so much for joining us today.

Stephen Forster 01:15

You're very welcome. Thank you for having me. It's such an honour I've known about Skills for Care for a very long time. And yeah, when you asked me I called my wife, it was almost a tear in the eye moment to be honest. Because always think you've got to you've got to remain humble, haven't you? And you've got to remember where you started. And when I'm on Jonathan Ross. I'll be sure to mention you. So don't worry about

Pia 01:42

brilliant. Yeah, that makes your name check both of us, won't you? And the care exchange

Stephen Forster 01:47

I don't think Johnathon Ross has many care influencers on there or care related people, but you never know. Maybe we maybe we could be the first. Yeah, exactly.

Pia 01:55

So we've heard introduction there that you've started your own business, working with social care providers, kind of helping them recruit them, and either are helping them sort of kind of around training and recruiting well. So just thinking about your experiences working as a homecare, as a care assistants to support lots of recruit people into social care, be really interested to hear from your experience when a candidate applies for a job in social care. What should that journey look like? From sort of kind of very moment somebody applies? Yeah,

02:28

it's the number one topic, isn't it? And I'm glad that was one of your main questions. So that the full recruitment journey is something that I would say the majority of care providers aren't familiar with, just because they haven't been taught it, they've forgotten how to do it. And they've just lost that practice, potentially. And that that can easily happen. So when I look at the full recruitment journey, I'm looking at every single step of the journey. So that's from a candidate reading a job advert to then applying on indeed, for example. And then what what happens from there? So are the companies calling the candidate within 12 hours or on the same day, it has to definitely be within 24 hours. And then what happens on the phone call, you know, what, what's happening on this phone call? Is it? Is it a phone interview straightaway? If somebody doesn't pick up the phone, is there a voicemail left? Is there an email follow up? Are people been invited in for interviews straight away from the phone call? Because what I'm hearing at the moment is a lot of companies are messaging candidates on indeed, for example, saying Hi, thanks for your application. When are you free for an interview, which to me, that's the complete wrong way of doing the recruitment process, it has to be a phone call, and then follow that up by what I call the VET principle. So Voicemail, Email, Text, so if a candidate doesn't pick up the phone, leave a voicemail, send them an email, follow up with a text and then try that again after hours. So it's not a nine to five role as we know, care recruitment. Carers are often working, they're not available they might have a night shift. So you have all the out of hours you might have seen in my LinkedIn, I work every Sunday, and I get most of my success on Sundays by booking in people for interviews. Candidates are more than happy to speak on weekends. In six years of me doing recruitment, I've never had a candidate said to me once you know, who do you think you are calling me on a Sunday that I just have to be looking at when we're calling candidates, a lot of companies will say our candidates aren't picking up the phone these days. It's a nightmare. They're just applying for for whatever reason. That's that's just not true. I've not seen that happen at all for any any single one of my clients. So then yeah, so then we have to look at the next step of the journey, which I would say is, you know, we have to have interview availability from managers. There's no point me now as an internal recruiter, calling 20 candidates today. And then I haven't got interview availability. Does that make sense? So if I have an amazing candidate on the phone, I need to be booking them in straight away for

an interview. Look, you sound fantastic. You're exactly what our company needs, I can clearly tell you a compassionate person, I really want you to come for an interview, when is good for you to come meet me for an interview? Not oh great, I'll see when our managers free. And I'll get back to that's that is criminal, you cannot be doing that. It has to be done there. And then, because if you don't do it, then the company round the corner is going to be doing that as well. So we have to have interview availability, and then we need to be looking at what happens at face to face interview. You know, what, what, what is actually happening at that interview? Is it? Is it competency questions, is it a tour, a cup of tea,, are you getting to know the person what is actually happening at that interview, so that those are the sort of first stages I would say, are key in the recruitment journey. But then after interview, I think offer management is becoming a big problem for companies. People who are conducting interviews are nervous to offer a role to some people, because they feel like they've got to check with the owner or the managers. So then they are waiting two or three days to get back, you know, they're not offering a role. So they're waiting two or three days, the candidates wondering what the hell's going on. And the candidates potentially had other interviews and being offered a role somewhere else. So I think we need to be giving the guys who were doing the face-to-face interviews, whether that's an administrator, an internal recruiter, or registered manager, whoever it is, they have to have the confidence to be able to offer on the spot, or definitely on the same day, we haven't gotten the luxury of being able to, you know, take two or three days or a week, it just doesn't work like that. This is a

Pia 06:53

so I'm hearing speed is kind of the main thing, you know, or one of the main components. Sorry Wendy.

Wendy 07:03

Yeah, I was just wanting to go back to what you said about that initial phone call, because you talked about the importance of that initial phone call. Yeah, I was wondering what you thought that phone call should include? Because I think a lot of managers that I speak to and lots of organisations that I speak to, do that, or attempt to do that sort of phone screening. But I think sometimes what happens is that that almost becomes like a first interview, and then they invite people back for a second interview. What do you think that first conversation should include? How long should it be? Is there anything you shouldn't discuss at that point? Or what should you discuss?

07:43

Yeah, amazing question. Yeah. So so it depends on the typical service. So for example, I look after a client, and it's it's very, very complex care. So they need to know it, you know, certain elements of the candidates, first, they have to have experienced this particular service. So there's no point having a five minute phone interview with somebody not asking key questions, they come in for an interview and find out it's complex care, and they're out of their depth. So for example, what why don't we make it very clear from the start? Look, just so you're aware, we actually care for people with complex care. And that, that can involve A, B, or C, some people have found that intimidating, or they're not quite sure they fit? Sometimes I think we maybe mean dementia care home or supportive living? What's your understanding of our company and see what the responses you know, engage with them? It's not it's not a look, I'm just, I'm just making sure you're aware, A, B, and C could happen to you, if you work for us? It's not an intimidating question. It's making it very clear from the start and not pulling the wool over people's eyes. You don't want to waste time from the start. But at the same time, I would make a

conversation so to say, look, I don't know if you saw from a job advert, but we actually work with people with complex care. We love what we do. It can be challenging at times. And I just wanted to make you aware of it. And you know, you don't have to make it an intimidating question. And at the same time, same time as well. For me, the screening question has to be values based. It just simply has to be, you know, don't pick up the phone saying, I'm just checking you can work on weekends, and you have a car. That that's not a way of asking if you want it you want to be engaging with the candidate having a conversation starting off straightaway. How was your weekend? What did you get up to a see from here on your CV, you've previously worked at a bakery or post office or whatever it may be. Tell me about that. Because then it shows you've actually dug a little deeper into the candidate. It's all about relationships. We can not get into a mindset of I just need to know if this person can work at 7am and they have a driving licence that cannot happen. It has to be values, getting to know the person, the whole aim for the 10 Minute screen. And I think it should be a 10 minute screen is your aim here is to get that person in for a face to face interview, that's the whole goal. So you have to be likeable, they have to warm to you straight away, and you have to sell the company as well.

Wendy 10:16

And who do you think should do that 10 minute screen. I mean, not all social care providers have that luxury, in some social care providers the manager is also the recruiter. But you know, in terms of your background, you've taught you've obviously worked for organisations where there's an HR department. So yeah, managers, should that be the HR department or the manager? Do you have a view on that? Yeah,

10:40

absolutely. It has to be based on the you know, it depends on the size of the company, I work with companies who are in the top 25 In the UK, but I also work with majority of startups. And you know, they only have one or two people in the office that might be the owner plus the registered manager. So I think it has to be, it depends on the situation, but it on the company, but it has to be ultimately the person who is the best at selling the company, and who has the best telephone manner. I don't care if that the administrator, the cleaner, the registered manager, the owner, whoever is best at selling the company, and has the best telephone manner, should be doing that phone screen. So for example, there's a lot of registered managers, who I've been speaking with lately. And they're they're having to run the service, as well as managing, as well as do the phone interviews, as well as do the face to face interviews and they getting overwhelmed. And that typically, registered managers don't always like recruitment. And they don't, they admit that they're not skilled at doing phone screens. It's just not their bag, they don't enjoy doing it. And they don't always want to do it. So to answer your question, I think it should be, you need to find out whoever in the company whoever is the best on the phone at selling the company, and whoever is the most skilled on the phone at selling a service and selling the role to people.

Pia 12:03

And then with that, so we've done the done the contacted them really quickly making, you know, doing the the VET principle, V E T principle, and then you're going to screening, the 10 minute screening and then we're obviously the aim is to get that person. Yeah. To the interview. Should anything happen between how quickly should that face to face interview happen? So you mentioned about making sure

the right person is available? And is there anything we should do between the time of the between the screening and the person coming in for the interview is anything that should happen in between?

12:40

Yeah, absolutely. So what what I would do is every every week, I would start the Monday or maybe the Friday saying to the whoever's doing the face to face interviews, let's say it's the registered manager. Let's say, I'd say, look, next week, I need two days from you for interviews, and at least four hours of those so Tuesday and Thursday between 10 and two, I mean, is that doable for you? Can we block it out for interviews, so book people in for interviews on on those days, and then in between an offer? So you get eight people in, for example, and in between the offer to the employee, and then getting them in for interview? I think I think it has to be the next day or the day after, I think one to two days. All about time to hire, I will be saying to the candidate. Look, we have interview availability tomorrow, Tuesday between 10 and two, can you make that? And typically the candidate will say, Oh, wow, I didn't realise you would have interview available that quick. Which is a great thing to say. But at the same time, well, if a candidate says to us now, I don't have Tuesday or Thursday free We need a plan B here. We can't do the week after. so I would say what works best for you. You tell me what works best for you. I can do five o'clock today. Okay. Right? Yeah, I can do that as well. I'll stay, I'll stay in the office, and I'll do five or six, that's fine. What I'll do now is I'm gonna send you over a text and email with our address. It might be difficult for you to bring the documents reviewed for compliance. But if you can, that would be great. I think it has to be as soon as possible and not, you know, reading a lot of things on LinkedIn and speaking to a lot of managers and they do interviews every other week. And that that to me just doesn't work. It's just you need to manage your time much better.

Pia 14:29

Yeah. So that speed is time

14:33

to hire is massive. Yeah, yeah. We're not in it. It's not I remember six years ago when I first started, and it was we were inundated with applications. It's not like, you know, care recruitment and the care industry has changed. It's all about speed. And it's a compliment to the candidates as well. You know, if somebody called me up and said, Can you come in today, Oh, wow. Yeah, I definitely can. Yeah, that's fine.

Pia 14:56

They they really want me? Yeah,

14:57

yeah, just enough. Yeah, and There's been a big debate about that sounds and looks desperate. Well, desperate to who who were trying to impress you, like, you know, like I would see the optimistic side of it and say no, no, it sounds fantastic. I would take it as a compliment personally.

Wendy 15:16

Is there anything that you think candidates should be provided in terms of preparing for the interview? You talked about values based interviewing? Do you give them anything else other than the time and date? Yeah. Well,

15:34

for the for the face to face interview. Sorry. Yes. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. So I am, as you mentioned this, I was a HR and recruitment manager for a domiciliary care company. And I used to send a top 10 tips on face to face interviews to the candidate along with the invite to interview. There's been a big debate about this saying no, no, you shouldn't be offering tips and advice to candidates, you know, you're giving them the answers. It's not fair. But what what's wrong with holding candidates at an interview? I don't see when that became a problem. Of course, if it's anything to do with safety, and maybe compliance, then yeah, I understand that. But, you know, I've been saying to candidates, look at the interview, I'm going to give you a tour for the first 10 minutes, then we'll have a discussion about you, then we're gonna have competency questions. The competency questions are going to be based around your previous experience what what your kindness and compassion? What makes you a standout candidate, and your personality attributes that make you a good care assistant. So then you're getting the candidate thinking, okay, so they're probably going to ask me for examples of our previous work, we want candidates to give the best possible answers at interview, we're not there to trap them, to intimidate them and to make them feel out of their out of their depth. So I definitely have no problem with email and letting candidates know what will happen at the face to face nterview.

Wendy 16:59

And I think that's really important. I think it's an interesting point, isn't it that an interview is about the person's chance to show the best version of themselves, not necessarily to demonstrate what they know about, you know, a particular topic and I have this conversation with lots of managers where I'll say, Well, why do you ask a question about safeguarding, for example, at interview, does that mean if the person gives her word perfect answer that then they dont need to do the safeguarding training and you know, all of the managers say oh, no, absolutely not. That would still do it. It's a case of well, actually, why are we asking that question then? And are we disadvantaging those people who have not worked in social care before?

17:43

100%? Yeah. 100%. So I always take myself back to when I started as a homecare assistant. So six years ago, I was a manager at Lidl didn't enjoy that particular role. And I wanted to do a role that helped people I went on Indeed, I Googled care assistant jobs. West Yorkshire where I live. I called the first I applied for the first role. I came in for an interview the next day, the owner called me and it was domiciliary care. She called me for an interview. She was a startup. So the interview actually took place at a house in Huddersfield. And the whole interview I was there an hour and a half. She admits she didn't ask me one question about training, medication, safeguard and compliance, because she knew that I wouldn't know those answers. She was taking it for face value. Heard that I was talking about why I wanted to work in care because my mom received care my brother receive care a long time ago, we had a really good conversation. She told me on the spot, she said, look, there's no doubt about it, Stephen, you will make a fantastic care assistant. What I need to do now is I'll get you on our training. And it's online training and face to face training that will make everything you've just talked about in

regards to kindness, compassion, this will deal with the other elements of care which you need to know. So 100% Yeah, so why why? Why are we I don't know, when that stopped. We should be doing that. More often. What I hear back from that responses. Yeah, but the guys without experience are typically the ones who leave first. So it's a problem for retention, but I'm yet to hear any statistics on that.

Pia 19:20

So that should you do anything about you know, what, why come and work for for me, you know, you've come for face to face interview with me as a manager, and um, you know, asking you lots of questions about you. Should you do something about why come and work for me?

Stephen Forster 19:40

Yeah, well, in regards to the candidate, sorry.

Pia 19:43

Yeah. So should be, you know, how should we be telling the candidates because obviously, we know there's lots of care jobs out there. So if you're, you know, you're you're maybe looking at you know, I've got three or four interviews this week. Your the first one because you've been fast. But you know, I might still go for those one or two. To further interviews, you know, what, what do you do to persuade at that point? Yeah,

20:04

yeah. So you have to look at your, I guess your USPS of your of your, your care company, don't you? And this is where I think care recruitment is borderline as a sales role, not in a traditional sales, this sentence in inverted commas. But how are you going to sell your company more than any other company? So can I focus on how the company started? Can I bring in some staff who are currently in the building and introduce them to the guys at interviewing, they can talk about how it is to work here. Can I show you testimonials on our social media pages and website, and tell you have why people work for us, and you have to stand out amongst the other companies, it typically will sometimes come down to money, especially now. So candidates may say, Look, I have three or four interviews next week, or this week, and they all pay two pound more an hour, then you, do you have to make sure your USPS of your particular care company is standing out whatever that may be, I used to have the owner of our domiciliary care company, come in the interview, sometimes if I knew that was happening, as a little nudge, you know, says, look, if I introduce you to our owner, and registered managers now I think you'll really enjoy that like their personality or get on very well. And they can tell you more about the role. So imagine that now they've just been interviewed by the HR manager, then one of the registered managers come to meet them. Now, the owner, they've had had two cups of teas have had a tour around the office, I've told them about training, I've told them about the shifts, and how it can work for them and their family life, straight away. My reputation and the company's reputation has increased. So you have to you have to also ask the right questions for that particular candidate. So if a candidate says to me, Look, I struggle on Fridays, I need to finish work by 4pm. Okay, we can make that work for you. You know, you know, and straightaway, they're gonna OK, I thought that might have been a bottleneck, but you know, you'd make it work for each particular individual. Yeah.

Pia 22:05

Is there anything? I talk, like Wendy does to a lot of registered managers and one of the things I will say, Oh, you know, I had 10 interviews booked up booked up today, and you know, only one one person showed is anything you can do to avoid no shows because they seem to be the the bane of managers lives. Yeah,

Stephen Forster 22:23

no shows are becoming a massive problems. I think it's all about the way it's obviously the, you know, the phone screen, and then what happens after the phone screen. So I can tell within a probably say, a minute or two, whether somebody is going to be right for this role. And I always ask the question at the end of the phone phone screen, you know, is that what what are your thoughts about what we've just discussed? Are we the right company for you? Can you see yourself working here? Is there anything we've just discussed that might make you not want to come here? And I always ask the question, is there any reason, you might not be able to come for interview tomorrow? Just ask that question. And sometimes, you know, people will say, in all honesty, it's yes, but it's because I'm getting on with you so well. But I already know tomorrow that I'm busy now and you know, have that come that's happened a lot that's happened two or three times in the last week last week to me actually. Because people will say yes, just to sometimes get you off the phone, just just to be a people pleaser. So I said that I always send I always have call to action. So CTA straight, after the interview, send an email, which will invite the person for an interview and get them to respond to that. And on the email, make sure you're sending people to your website and your social media pages as well as testimonials. That is another persuasive method to get people in. And I bet as well, I don't know if you know the answer to this, but I bet the people who are saying that no shows are a problem are typically ones who aren't inviting people in today or tomorrow. But so they're waiting too long. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. So again, I always ask for the stats on this and nine times out of 10. It will be because the gap, the time to hire is too long. And the candidates accurate because they've maybe forgotten about it. You might not have sent them an email on a text reminding them or you reminded them on the morning of the interview as well. And are you doing it I you inviting them in within 24 hours of the phone screen?

Wendy 24:25

Because I guess if the gap is too long, that's when people have been interviewed and offered a job by a different organisation. Yeah,

Stephen Forster 24:34

yeah, of course. And then the candidates then forgotten to let the company know that it had an interview arranged. Yeah, problem is people put all candidates in the same category, then it's er, it's you know, carers are all becoming the same and they're not showing up for interviews, which is which is not true. We have to treat we have to teach treat each application as an individual Yeah.

Pia 25:01

So just going back to the beginning, you mentioned when you're talking about this sort of journey, you started off by saying something about job adverts. What that should include, can we just have? Tell us a little bit about what, when, if you're writing an advert? What should that look like?

Stephen Forster 25:15

It should look the opposite to 99% of adverts. On the fence answer, isn't it, but what I mean by that is, so everybody's sort of saying Free parking and 28 days holiday as a perk. And I don't know when this happened like these, these aren't perks you need to look at the benefits of the serious benefits of working for your company and put them to the top of the advert get the benefits right at the top. So mutually benefits of working for us and list them out in bullet form not not in sentences, the light reading points, so do that, I would suggest everybody change your adverts immediately get the benefits to the top, then ensure you have shift patterns on there as well. Because what's happening is people getting on the phone and getting to interview and then they find out they have to do it in order to do 40 hours, in DomCare, you need to do 7am while 10pm Because of the shift times and the client needs, then it's not doable. So you've wasted everybody's time. And some companies are just not putting on pay. So it's a competitive pay, which which I'm seeing more more and more. Just Just be honest about the pay from the start. You know, that's that's what it is. But that free tips in a nutshell is there's a lot more I could talk about in regards to job adverts.

Wendy 26:42

I think the benefits at the top is a really interesting one. Because when you look on most job adverts, what job adverts usually start with is this is what we're expecting from you not, this is what we can offer you. Yeah, that is really interesting, isn't it? Yeah, absolutely man, your job description upside down your job advert upside down.

Stephen Forster 27:04

And as well, next to the benefits to the top. As an alternative, I'd be saying, Look, who are we targeting here? Make it more values based? So are you semi retired looking for a part time role? Working with amazing people? Are you a student looking for additional hours around college or university? Are you a kind, compassionate person who's never who's considered care, but never really had anybody to persuade you to work in care, I have no doubt there's 10s of 1000s of people out there who would love working in care, yet, they just don't know enough about the industry and they're just not persuaded enough to apply for a role is to happens time and time again, is we need to focus on getting people from different industries to come to the care in the industry. I mean, this might be a different podcast in itself. But you know, we have to attract new people into the industry as well. So I would look at your advert on the values more than what we expect of you, and what you can offer them as well. You know, we can offer you flexible hours around childcare, we can offer you a role that is not only rewarding, but you're gonna be working with amazing people every single day you're genuinely make a difference in people's lives.

Wendy 28:18

So how do we get around the fact that if you advertise on job boards, people will tend to see your advert if they filter on that type of job. So people, people might need to filter on social care jobs in order to in order to see your job advert that means that they've got to have considered working in social care. Have you any thoughts about how we, how we work with that to get job adverts in front of people who might not have even considered working in social care?

Stephen Forster 28:50

Yeah, it's very, very challenging on job boards, because that is also obviously a job title specific. I think we have to look at probably the bigger picture of, of, you know, schools and look at it from a younger age and how to encourage younger people to want to work in care and make it an appealing job, especially after COVID. I, don't think on on job adverts and job titles on job boards. It's very, very difficult because what we cannot what what what, unless you wanted to specifically work in care, you have to search for care jobs, don't you? Really?

Pia 29:30

You mentioned social media a couple of times, is it important to be in social media?

Stephen Forster 29:36

Yeah, you well, you have to be on social media for many, many reasons. So the main reason is that so I did a bit of research in 2021. I spoke to 400 care assistants and at the end of the call, I asked every single person just out of interest. Did you check our social media pages before this phone call? And 76% out of 400 said yes, so three quarters. And then the rest said, it's funny, you mentioned that I haven't. But I was going to do that after this call. So that's social media or website I should add. So you would 100% have to have social media. So from a business, from a from a care point of view or care company point of view, I used to manage when I was an HR manager and manage our Facebook and Instagram pages. And I never ever put adverts on there. I never used to spam the pages with recruiting now recruiting now 100% of the posts were about meet the team's, testimonials and events. So we were just having a we're having a barbecue, this is what happened to our Christmas event. And charity work. So imagine now you're following my social media pages. And you see, look, here's here's Carer A. She's been with us 3 months, here's what she or he had to say about working in care. And then straight away. People are resonating with those people that way. Now, hold on, there didn't have experience and they've been with that company three years. Yeah, that sounds unbelievable. So you created a brand around ycare company buzz. So you know, I used to share images of one of our registered managers did the London Marathon, I shared photos, we got about 200 likes, and people were straightaway going Oh, that's great. She did the London Marathon for dementia care. Fantastic. They're obviously a caring, compassionate company. And then I used to do videos of our training. So just quick videos, like a reel on Instagram, use a quick, snappy, modern day videos and just creates a bit of a buzz around your company. And what what I would say with this, as well as a lot of managers, registered managers, carers who haven't got time for social media, what I would suggest is asking in your team who enjoys social media and giving that responsibility to them, so one you're giving them additional responsibilities, so they feel rewarded, two they enjoy it, three they're very good at it, four you don't have to do it. Five, you're going to recruit and retain more staff. So get give that responsibility to somebody within the team who actually enjoys enjoys doing it. And I think registered managers, especially as well, especially for senior roles need to, especially on LinkedIn, they need to have social media because they need to be posting about their company, to attract other people to work there as well. Only on LinkedIn, I don't think I don't think you need to post care assistant roles on LinkedIn. But if you're hiring senior roles, you definitely need to be posted on there just to get a bit of a buzz around your company.

Pia 32:35

And which so you mentioned Facebook and Instagram which if you are like oh my god, this is a new thing for me. I'm gonna start somewhere, where should they start? What's the social media platform? Let's just start with

Stephen Forster 32:48

100% Facebook 100%. Yeah, people go on there, that's the scrolling. There, check it out on the pages, you can tag people in there, people can share the posts as well. And I would follow that up with Instagram as well just because the well Facebook owns Instagram so that they're linked. And it's just a more it's more of a photograph. So you can share events and activities that are happening quicker. And it you know, it takes 10 minutes to share the image. It's not a time consuming element. And

Wendy 33:19

I really like what you're saying about that. It shouldn't be just advert after advert because I do sometimes see on Facebook, organisations and it just literally if you went onto their Facebook feed, it literally is just advert after advert after advert and I guess you know, for people looking on Facebook, that's not what any of us go on Facebook for. We go on Facebook to see nice things and, you know, things that interest us not necessarily, you know, we don't flick through Facebook in the same way that you would, you know, a job.

Stephen Forster 33:53

Of course, yeah, social media is exactly what it says. And it's a social platform. It's not a job platform. So I would I would never post not maybe maybe once a month I'd have a slight reminder or maybe at the end of one of your posts so you might have a meet the team and it says Look Me, Sandra, she's been with us 12 months she used to be a she used to work at supermarket. She loves working in care because of a b and c if you'd like to be the next Sandra Apply Yeah, send us a send us a quick message not not recruiting now recruiting now recruiting now spamming the page. It's not. That does look desperate. And that's what we said earlier about is that that that is desperate and it creates no personality around your company either. You people want to go on your social media and say Are they looked like a really fun company to work for? I'm going to send them a message. It's exactly what I did for 18 months when I was an HR recruiting manager in dom care. I just did a post about all the amazing staff meet the teams the reward the Christmas party. as people see those photos, and they immediately want to work for you as well. So it becomes, it actually becomes an amazing recruitment and retention tool. Because if you show your staff that, you know, you're rewarding staff with gratitude on social media, that's a great feeling to have. You know, you're basically bragging about your staff. They're not going to want to leave you Why would they want to leave you? You're saying them, they are amazing.

Pia 35:28

Yeah. And they get to share that with other people aren't they, you know, praise me, I'm gonna go oh, look at look at me, you know, they get their page on the

Stephen Forster 35:38

people get jealous in a good way You know, a nice jealous I got that. I'd love to be like that person. What do I have to do? I remember Stephen put on his message that I send them a DM if I want to get in touch. That's exactly what I'm gonna do.

Pia 35:51

Yeah, yeah, exactly. And respond to those quick. Those DMS, isn't it? Yes, please.

Stephen Forster 35:59

Yeah, it winds me up. The Friday rule I'll deal with it Monday. No, no. Right now,

Pia 36:06

I had. I had a manager the other day said to me, Oh, I'm not sure about recruiting social media, because people never complete the application form. I send them and I was like, not sure that you should be sending them. A long application form via dm

Stephen Forster 36:19

a phone call isn't 100%? Yeah. And it doesn't have to be again, if somebody applied on Facebook with me. I call them up. Hi. We've been chatting. I see you liked our post. And you've just sent me a message about working for us. My name is Steven is now a good time, or should we chat about a time what works best for you straightaway, think about God. Like that was quick isn't? I didn't expect to get a call that quick. And care recruitment, Along with social media is very, very simple. You just have to keep the processes. Consistent. That's always

Pia 36:54

Yeah. So you, you must talk to hundreds of people who are looking to change care roles. You know, what, what are the What are the reasons why people leave jobs? And what can managers do to prevent them leaving?

Stephen Forster 37:08

Yeah, so I guess that I guess it kind of comes in what we've just been discussing. You have to you have to be constantly, not constantly sorry, that might sound a bit too much. But for people who are performing well tell them they're performing well. You know, and let them know, every single every single day, a simple email, text phone call or in person. How did you you know, if you're, if you're if you're a dom care company, you have an office or support, you know, one location? How did you call get on it yesterday? How are you getting on? is the drive there, okay? You find it? Okay. It was was his training going? Okay. Ask questions, people, people have stopped asking questions, and expect that the calls are going okay, and expect that the staff are happy? If you expect these things, and then somebody hands their notice in, Well, that's your that's your fault, isn't it? That's your problem. You've just been taking them for granted. So I think I think number one is making people feel valued. That's the number one reason to keep the best way to keep staff or retain staff is make them feel valued. communicate with them, see how they're getting on? Is there anything we can do better? And I used to ask people as well, look, I remember when we did an interview, you said you wanted to work here for 18 months, it's actually been 18 months now, where are we at with that like do you see yourself staying longer, you're happy and have an open door policy as well. I used to know my staff inside out and there was 65 of them. I had an open door policy, I knew everything about them. I knew everything about the kids that dogs the family life. And when I saw them, I would ask questions, and I'd remember details about them. So what happens there is straightaway are the Office team are fantastic. always asked

about always they're always checking on my kids are getting on. They always want to know about me. They're not asking if I can work overtime. They're not asking if I can definitely do that shift that I promised that doing two weeks. It's more about me. If you treat people well, they will they're gonna stay with you aren't they, I don't think people leave roles. I think they'll leave people. I think they'll leave leave owners. You have to make people feel valued all the time.

Pia 39:18

Yeah, great. And it goes back to that value based recruitment. And it's a value based value based retention, isn't it?

Stephen Forster 39:23

But the thing is, as well, what we're discussing here is it's all really, really positive. And it's not, it shouldn't be challenging because we all work in care. So when did we stop caring and values comes into the bucket of care? I mean, so asking people how they already if they're happy is not a challenge. I know we shouldn't just be asking to tick a tick box either we should genuinely listen to the answer's no, I'm not happy. Oh, okay. Do you wanna sit down for a cup of tea? Can we discuss it?

Wendy 39:49

Think sometimes managers are reluctant to ask that question about how are things because the they don't want the answer because it might be something that they can't do. Something about so that people say, well, actually, you're not paying me enough or, you know, I don't have enough time to do everything I want to do that, that the manager doesn't want to ask the question, because they don't want to hear the answer, because they haven't got a solution. But I think what you're talking about is that sometimes people just feel valued by having the opportunity to, to say, yeah,

Stephen Forster 40:25

100% Yeah, yeah, just Yeah, exactly. Yeah. So as well, you know, I don't think you should be, if they are worried about the the answers that can be an employee might give, then they need to talk to somebody about that themselves. You know, so are worried like, people that look in the last 10. So you do an exit interview with the last 10 people have left, because they're going around the corner, they're getting paid 50 P more an hour? Is there anything what not? How can we stop this from happening? Can we pay more? Or can we focus more on training? Do we need to do some values? Seminars? Or do we need to treat people better? Do we need to give people gifts or Christmas parties or whatever it may be? Because people are leaving more and more for money. Now that that's happening, we're seeing it happen, more and more carers are leaving for agencies as well, unfortunately. Because money right now is talking. So how can we get staff to stay and it's all down to values. Because if there's a choice between 10 pound 50 or 12 pound 50. But your values are fantastic at the 10 pound 50 They will stay. But you have to make sure that you treating them unbelievably well. Yeah,

Wendy 41:33

I think the thing that strikes me that you're talking about there is also about really thinking about what's working, what's not working, why are and and looking at the data around, why are people leaving? And then using that information to then come up with a plan about what you're going to what you're going to do about it? So it's very evidence, what you're describing is almost like evidence based

Stephen Forster 42:01

attention, I guess, yeah, the stats don't lie do the so. Well, firstly, every company should be doing exit interviews, for more than one reason CQC want to see that. And it helps you as a company to know why people are leaving. And you shouldn't be avoiding exit interviews at all, you should want to know why people are leaving. And typically what will happen is, and I've seen this happen, many, many times is the owner or the register manager will ask somebody who did the exit interview, why they left and it'll just be a simple. They just didn't fancy it anymore. And it's like, well, that's not that's not really good enough. Like why did they not fancy it? You know what, we need genuine answers here and make it make it you know, this fact, there's five reasons. Let's make it five reasons people leave. They didn't like us. It was pay, hours. They moved house, whatever it may be. So if people leaving because of hours. Okay, what hours would suit you better? Well, I prefer to do evenings rather than mornings where we have evening shifts, why don't we change that and see how you get onto the first month? I have no doubt that companies could keep a huge amount of staff if they focused on why people are actually leaving.

Pia 43:12

Interesting. Yeah, definitely.

Wendy 43:14

We could talk all day about this. Yeah. We want to just move to the couple of questions that we ask all of our podcast guests. And the first one is our time to care slot that we have in every episode. What's your most time saving tip? oh God, no pressure?

Stephen Forster 43:38

No. Yeah, number one, you know what we actually discussed it. So hope you don't feel like I'm repeating myself but that just emphasises how important it is. So my most time consuming tip is having quick 10 minute phone screens rather than half an hour or one hour for choose do not do the interview on the phone screen. And just, you know, say you work eight, nine hours a day. And you're doing you know 10 phone calls at half an hour each or an hour. All of a sudden half your days gone. And you're complaining to register manager with not enough time and you get stressed and want to leave so yeah, my most numer 1, 10 minute phone screen. And sorry to add to it, this is a second one given interview, set interview availability each week, and not a not shifting on that as well. I understand things can change and as emergencies. I totally get that. But have given given interview availability to whoever's doing the phone screens because what's going to happen is they're going to go back on themselves, then you just go around in circles. Yeah.

Pia 44:48

You're planning planning a week, aren't you? Yeah, maybe. And maybe always have some sort of kind of out of hours. Yeah, time available set, you know, say oh, you know, Tuesday Is my evening? Well, I'm available to seven or something, you know, so you recognising that some stuff, some potential candidates might might not be able to do Office Hours isn't as well. Yeah,

Stephen Forster 45:12

exactly that. Exactly that.

Wendy 45:14

And our final question. So I'd like you to imagine that we're in a lift on the 10th. Floor, going down with a group of registered managers. And before everyone gets out, you want to tell them what you think is the most important key message to leave them with? What would that be?

Stephen Forster 45:32

Firstly, where's this lift? This is an interesting lift, isn't it? Is this? We just thought we're just not going to do just a coincidence. We're all in this lift. I like that. Yeah, that's

Pia 45:40

like 10 registered managers just squeezed into

Stephen Forster 45:42

What do you do? Ah, well, yeah, like that? Yeah, sorry. I've used it my 30 seconds, I guess. Yeah. You know what I would say to them, I would say take yourself back to when you were, when you first started in care. Take yourself back to that exact moment. And how did you feel? So I bet you had no experience, and no one gave you a chance. So I would say, Look, when you do recruitment, give people a chance, focus on the values, strip everything back, you might have been a registered manager or care manager for the last 10 20 30 years. Take yourself back to that moment when you first started, and how would you want to want it to be treated to your skills? Give people a chance? And please focus more on values.

Wendy 46:32

But yeah, brilliant. Yes, absolutely. Because so many of the registered managers, sitting listening to this today will have started as a care worker, like I did, like Pia did like you did. And it is that bit about thinking about how did you feel before you were applying for your first

Stephen Forster 46:51

match if I'd gone to that interview six years ago, being a can, supermarket manager, and she made me feel intimidated or, you know, asking me questions or patronising me or not giving me a chance? I would, I wouldn't have my own business now. You have we have to strip everything back in and treat people unbelievably well. And it sounds obvious. Just remember not to stop doing that.

Pia 47:17

Yeah, social care is about being kind and compassionate. And that should include how you treat people applying for jobs, isn't it?

Stephen Forster 47:26

I forget. Yeah.

Pia 47:28

Really, really great conversation. Thank you so much for your time today. It's been really good. And I'm hoping that everybody listening to this episode, have learned something is scribble something down, they're going to go back and have a look at their recruitment process and see if there's anything they need to tweak or change. So thanks so much for your time today. Thank you.

Stephen Forster 47:45

You're very welcome. Thanks for having me. I really appreciate it.

Pia 47:47

Thanks a lot. Bye.

Pia 47:59

Great conversation there, Wendy. Really, really lovely to talk to Steven, wasn't it? Yeah, it

Wendy 48:03

was fabulous. Wasn't it really good.

Pia 48:06

So generous with his top tips, you know, and just lots of really good ideas for managers to sort of kind of pick up and run with I think, you know, I just, I love the love the conversation we had about, you know, candidates journey, just really thinking about what is that person's experience from the moment they start working with us. start seeing that advert, and then coming through, you know, having those initial conversations where you have an additional initial conversation with the whole interview with the manager, and then on onwards after that, and then, and then also, the retention bit was interesting as well, isn't it?

Wendy 48:42

Yeah, very much. And I loved what he said about the whole process needing to be quite slick, and streamlined and quite efficient. Because sometimes it can be a real challenge for managers content with everything that needs to be done in that process of recruiting somebody.

Pia 48:59

Yeah. And thinking about it as a journey. I really like that, you know, just thinking about what is that journey for that person? You know, Can I can I write out every single stage, that's gonna happen. Obviously, we talked lots about value based recruitment. Obviously, we have the value based recruitment Toolkit, which we've mentioned a few times in the podcast. I was thinking as well with that journey. So we only really talked up to the point of person, the person being offered the job. And then obviously, I know we talked a little bit about retention, but once somebody has been appointed, one of the things that a lot of managers talk to me about is DBS and having to wait for DBS. So later, later, in 2023, we recorded some webinars with DBS that just sort of kind of gives a bit of a one of the things you need to think about what are the things the reasons why they may be delays? What are the things that you can do to reduce some of those delays? It is a bit of a kind of factfinding from DBS about what are What are the issues to be aware of and one of the one of the things that you can do as a manager to make changes?

Wendy 50:06

Yeah, yeah, that'd be really useful for people. And absolutely, you know that that bit about checking once you've you've employed, somebody really made me think about the better hiring toolkit that we did in partnership with other organisations, some some key partners, because it talks about not so much the DBS part, but it talks about references. And again, I think references is an area that often managers struggle with. But that toolkits really good because it talks about how to gather references and conduct information. But it also talks about when somebody's leaving you, what you should be sharing with when giving a reference to somebody else. So a really useful resource, I think, yeah,

Pia 50:55

and that toolkit has loads of templates that people can do. And I you know, I've been a manager hiring manager for many, many years and there was lots of tips in there that I felt like I didn't know then I didn't realise that's the way around points them what do you do when you can only get one reference because the other company has gone out of business or something, you know, just gives you a really good ideas about how to how to deal with some of the issues in that kind of next stage of the recruitment process. So we hope you have enjoyed the our conversation today with Steven. If you have enjoyed today's episode, please do tell another manager, are they if you go to a network meeting or in a WhatsApp group or on a Facebook group, you know, tell another manager back how you've been doing the care exchange. And that's it for today. Thanks very much. Bye bye.