

Building and Retaining a Strong Pharmacy

Technician Workforce

Expert insights from Leaders at Walmart, Beth Israel Lahey Health,
and the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB)

Branding: TRC Healthcare logo + subtle tagline about supporting
pharmacy leaders

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“Pharmacy technician used to be a job. Now it’s a career.”

Julie Lanza

Introduction

Whether in hospital, educational, or retail settings, the healthcare industry
needs more pharmacy technicians.

The national shortage of practitioners in this crucial role is having a
negative impact on patient access, safety, and care delivery. At the same
time, a number of states have expanded technician responsibilities to

include immunization, diagnostics, and advanced clinical services. This means more career opportunities for pharm techs, but more required training and certification as well.

To face these challenges, forward-looking organizations are treating technician workforce development as a strategic priority. Increased investments in recruiting, onboarding, and career advancement are proving essential not only to fill vacancies but also to build and maintain high-performing, future-ready teams.

For this paper, **Ryan Burke (PTCB)** provides research-backed insights into the state of the pharmacy technician workforce today, while highlighting best practices developed in partnerships between educators, employers, and the PTB.

Lupe Govea (Walmart) and **Julie Lanza (Beth Israel)** reveal how each of their organizations redefined the pharmacy technician role with individualized onboarding, continuous training, and clearly defined career paths. Together, these leaders offer practical strategies for:

- Expanding your hiring pipeline
- Combining standardized and individualized onboarding to set technicians up for success
- Investing in training and certifications to retain high-performing employees and fuel career growth
- Strengthening retention through recognition, increased responsibilities, advancement, and competitive compensation

Across all three perspectives, one theme stands out: treating technicians as healthcare professionals *and* as individuals.

Supported by clear systems and career pathways, this human-first approach drives engagement, retention, and better patient care.

[Boxed quote] “PTCB’s workforce research shows that one of the main reasons pharmacy technicians enter the field is their desire to help people. By tapping into that motivation, we can better elevate technicians into expanded roles and greater scopes of practice.” - Ryan Burke, PTCB

[Boxed quote] “When technicians understand this is a true career choice—and see the impact of their work—they begin to build meaningful, lasting careers in healthcare.” - Lupe Govea, Walmart

Section 1: Recruiting & Hiring Best Practices

Career pathways widen the hiring pipeline and attract top candidates.

1. Build Your Own Pipeline with In-House Training

Organizations can create internal “tech-in-training” programs that turn motivated individuals with no healthcare experience into nationally certified pharmacy technicians within months. By combining structured

education (like [Pharmacy Technicians University](#)), PTCB's range of certifications, and strong internal support, employers can make the pharmacy technician role more attractive to higher-level talent — not just as a job but as a career. And those candidates have already been integrated into the organization's culture through standardized onboarding and non-specialized training. **At Beth Israel, this model cut technician vacancies by 37% across the health system.**

[Boxed Quote:] "With the current staffing shortages, we had to get creative with recruitment. About three years ago, we launched our own in-house pharmacy tech training program. We market it across our system. You can apply for this job with zero healthcare experience, and we're going to help you become certified in six months, with full education through Pharmacy Technician's University, national certification from PTCB, and all the resources and support you need to succeed. Anyone is eligible to apply." - **Julie Lanza, Beth Israel**

Another example: among many other options Walmart's career development initiative, Live Better U, offers pathways for employees with no pharmacy background to pursue healthcare careers, including in pharmacy technology.

Boxed quote: *"It's important to us that our associates outside of health and wellness have visibility into the opportunities available in this space. Through programs like Live Better U, we've built pathways for Walmart associates who are curious about pharmacy to become certified*

technicians—and in many cases, continue on to earn bachelor's degrees, become pharmacists, or even move into the home office in other departments.” -Lupe Govea, Walmart

2. Engage Early with Career Influencers in your Community

Organizations looking for pharmacy technician candidates can enhance their recruiting beyond job boards. Trusted educators, counselors, and pharmacy partners can be a good resource for prospective candidates.

[Boxed Quote:] “At PTCB, we’ve made a deliberate effort to engage the people who influence student careers—high school counselors, health science educators, and pharmacist organizations—to share information about career pathways for technicians and highlight the many opportunities within pharmacy. We launched the Pharmacy Technician Educators Council, so leaders like Julie, Lupe, and educators in high schools and community colleges are equipped with the information they need to guide students toward a rewarding career as a pharmacy technician.” - Ryan Burke, PTCB

3. Attract Talent by Emphasizing Career Opportunities

PTCB research shows certified techs are 14% more likely to see the role as the beginning of a true career. Show your candidates what a

long-term future with your organization could look like, by taking them through possible career stages and credentialed, upskilling opportunities.

4. Flip the Job Description

Job descriptions shouldn't just list duties—they should place the role in the context of the workforce you want to build. By outlining career pathways, certifications, and growth opportunities, **your job description can be both a recruiting tool and a training roadmap**, signaling your investment in long-term technician development.

[Boxed Quote:] “Instead of writing a generic job description and trying to fit a technician into it, we build our job descriptions around the technicians we want to develop. We use the description as both a training roadmap and a recruiting tool—outlining the skills, certifications, and career milestones that define the role. This approach has helped us attract motivated candidates, set clear expectations, and create a path for long-term growth.” — Julie Lanza, Beth Israel Lahey Health

Section 2: Training & Onboarding (First 90 Days)

Effective onboarding and training combines both standardized and individualized approaches.

1. Build Consistency with SOPs That Work

Clear Standard Operating Procedures and structured training plans establish alignment across sites and ensure consistency. **Involving**

trainers and experienced technicians in SOP development keeps them grounded in real-world practice while also fostering ownership and buy-in from the teams who use them daily.

[Boxed Quote:] “Writing policies, procedures, and onboarding manuals shouldn’t just come from leadership. Our experienced technicians are on the front line—they see what works every day. They’re the ones who should be shaping these resources. Bringing them into the process makes SOPs more effective—and helps technicians feel invested in the standards they’re expected to uphold.” **Julie Lanza, Beth Israel Lahey Health**

2. Unifying Training Across States and Sites

For national employers operating across thousands of locations with varying state regulations, consistency in onboarding is critical. Clear processes and structured training ensure every technician understands their role, responsibilities, and scope of practice. Leveraging technology and standardized curricula like PTU enables a unified onboarding journey—from day one through national certification—improving retention, compliance, and workforce readiness.

[Boxed quote] “With more than 4,600 locations across different states and regulations, standardizing onboarding is no easy task. The key has been building clear processes and training so every associate understands exactly what they can and cannot do in their role and state. We’ve leaned into technology, AI, and PTU to deliver a consistent onboarding journey—

*from the first 90 days through national certification.”— **Lupe Govea, Walmart***

3. But Maintain a People-First Perspective

The best onboarding programs recognize that technicians aren’t interchangeable. Each arrives with unique strengths, gaps, and experiences. Early training should be designed to identify differences and to encourage technicians to realize and express their own interests.

*[Boxed Quote:] “Every individual brings unique strengths, experiences, attitudes, work styles, educational backgrounds. In training, we make sure each employee is seen and treated as an individual person—that human-first approach is one of our mottos and guides everything we do with training.— **Julie Lanza, Beth Israel Lahey Health***

4. Assign Mentors or Sponsors

Pairing new hires with experienced technicians creates an immediate support network and grounds learning in the real-world practicalities of the job. As with involving frontline technicians in developing policies and training, this too offers an impactful professional opportunity for your veteran staffers. **Both Walmart and Beth Israel** matched technicians with a mentor or sponsor who provides guidance, answers questions, and models best practices.

[Boxed Quote:] *“We want onboarding to be holistic, but we also want it to be also personal. Beyond the technology that supports our training journey, each new technician is paired with a Walmart sponsor—tenured individuals who provide pearls of wisdom and help answer questions as trainees progress. That personal connection makes a big difference.”* –

Lupe Govea, Walmart

5. Provide Early Visibility into Growth Opportunities

Onboarding is the ideal time to show technicians a variety of options for long-term their future with the organization. There’s no better way to emphasize *your* commitment to *them* than by walking them through potential career ladders, certifications, and development paths at the outset.

[Boxed Quote:] *“Technician roles and scope of practice keep expanding, which means more opportunities for career growth. Too often I’ve heard, ‘I didn’t know that was something I could do.’ One of our health system’s best practices is ensuring training leaders are knowledgeable and up to date on available resources and career paths, so technicians understand what’s possible right from the start.”* — **Julie Lanza, Beth Israel**

[Boxed Quote:] *“Certification turns a job into a career. When technicians see a path forward, they’re more likely to stay and grow with your organization.”* — **Ryan Burke, PTCB**

5. Combine Technical Skill Training with Soft Skill Training

As in many other fields, leaders in healthcare understand the value of what are now defined as soft skills in their professions. Along with technical know-how and language skills, your interviews should emphasize **empathy, adaptability, teamwork, and good communication**, and onboarding and training should prioritize these essential skills as well.

*[Boxed Quote:] “At Walmart, we put a lot of energy into making sure candidates truly understand what it means to be a pharmacy technician. Our recruitment strategies focus on finding people with the **right soft skills** to thrive in a high-impact environment. We can teach math and English proficiency. We focus heavily on ensuring candidates demonstrate empathy and genuine care.” - Lupe Govea, Walmart*

Section 3: Retention and Advancement

Organizations that invest in career paths, recognition, and growth don’t just keep technicians longer—they build stronger teams, better outcomes, and measurable returns.

[Boxed quote:] Recruitment is critical, but we put just as much care and attention into retention. It’s how we show technicians the value they bring to the healthcare team and why their careers matter. -Julie Lanza, Beth Israel

1. Expand Technician Roles

Helping technicians grow beyond routine dispensing will

demonstrate your investment in their future. Providing opportunities to develop and formally certify expertise in point-of-care testing, immunizations, or medication reconciliation will reinforce their professional value and strengthen long-term commitment.

[Boxed Quote:] “We’ve built a range of advanced technician roles and made PTCB certifications part of our career ladders and job descriptions. It gives our technicians a sense of value by expanding their responsibilities. We also reimburse for certification exams, removing barriers to advancement. Just as important, we involve technicians directly in their training journey—whether their passion is supply chain, compounding, or training the next generation. When technicians are heard, given a voice, and supported in pursuing their interests, the result is stronger engagement and a more committed workforce.” - Julie Lanza, Beth Israel Lahey Health

2. Build Career Ladders Around Certification

Certification is more than a credential — it’s a lever for retention and advancement. Employers who tie PTCB certification and advanced credentials to career ladders can inspire pharmacy technicians to develop expertise in specialized areas such as compounding, immunization, point-of-care testing, or diversion management.

[Boxed Quote:] *“Of our research, sixty percent of technicians surveyed earned credentials specifically to advance their careers—signaling their intent to stay in the profession and build new skills. We also know certified technicians are more likely to remain in the field than those without credentials. Both data points underscore the power of investment: technicians invest in themselves, and employers invest in them by supporting certification. Together, they elevate pharmacy technicians from a job to a healthcare profession. -Ryan Burke, PTCB*

3. Pay Upfront

Even though pursuing advanced certifications is optional, the organization should cover exam and license costs, and if possible, pay up front. This simple step shows real investment in your team and reduces financial stress for employees.

Note: PTCB has a direct billing option making it easy for employees to cover the cost of certifications.

[Boxed Quote:] *“When we launched advanced and specialized credentials in 2019, our goal was for employers to see their value. Six years later, that’s exactly what we’re seeing: employers are building these credentials into career ladders and job descriptions. That recognition motivates technicians to invest in their learning because they know it will pay off. Employers can support that growth by funding certification, giving technicians time to study, and creating opportunities to apply new*

knowledge in their current role or through expanded responsibilities.” -

Ryan Burke, PTCB

3. Turn Input into Impact

When technicians have a voice in shaping how work gets done, they feel valued, engaged, and invested. **Build structured ways for them to share ideas and concerns — such as helping to build processes or evolve procedures** — to demonstrate how that feedback drives real improvements.

“ If you are an independent pharmacy owner, look at the tasks happening around you—are there responsibilities a technician could take on as a growth opportunity? Could they help write new policies, lead a project, or implement a new process to improve care or efficiency? Those small steps go a long way in retention.” —Ryan Burke, PTCB

“ We’ve built feedback loops that give our technicians a voice—because they often have the best ideas. When opportunities for improvement come in, our teams review them, and many of those ideas become solutions deployed across all 4,600 locations. With special projects, technicians from across the country can come to our home office in Arkansas and work directly with the leaders who design our SOPs and training.”— Lupe Govea, Walmart

4. Celebrate Wins

Highlight technician contributions not only in newsletters and LinkedIn spotlights, but also in the everyday moments that matter most — make it a priority to deliver thank-yous from leadership, peer-to-peer shout-outs, and recognition for quality patient interaction. Publicly celebrating achievement strengthens loyalty, reinforces values, and inspires others across the organization.

*[Boxed quote] “It doesn’t have to be a grand gesture or new job role to advance your technicians.” — **Ryan Burke, PTCB***

*Boxed Quote: “We also make a point to celebrate our associates—whether through LinkedIn highlights, internal communications, or opportunities to participate in special projects.” — **Lupe Govea, Walmart***

6. Support Personal and Professional Growth

You can boost retention by encouraging technicians to pursue professional involvement, leadership opportunities, or continued education that broadens their impact and confidence.

Walmart’s *Live Better U* takes it further with a program that helps their associates to pursue college degrees or additional certifications—opening doors to advancement within and beyond the pharmacy.

In addition, as mentioned before, you should involve your top performing technicians in shaping policies and in training less experienced staff.

You should also continually remind your technicians (and your whole staff, for that matter) of the well-being components of your overall benefits package, such as flexible scheduling, family leave policies, and mental health resources.

[Boxed Quote:] “We do a lot to encourage professional but also personal growth. We encourage our technicians to volunteer for PTCB, get involved in the state associations, write an article for a technician magazine, and give CE on a state level. Their professional development within our four walls is important to us, but we want this career to be important to them. We want to see them advance personally and advance personally beyond their work at the hospital.” - Julie Lanza, Beth Israel Lahey Health

6. **Connect to Patient Impact**

As previously referenced, PTCB’s workforce research confirms that one of the main reasons pharmacy technicians enter the field is their desire to help people. Be sure to emphasize, to your new and veteran technicians, real stories where someone in their role had a direct positive impact on patient outcomes, showing just how essential pharmacy technicians are to the overall effectiveness of your healthcare team.

Boxed quote: “Technicians in most states can now take part in point-of-care testing, and we’ve seen incredible outcomes from our Walmart wellness events. One story that has stayed with me for years involved a technician who noticed a patient’s blood pressure was dangerously high during a routine screening. The technician immediately involved the pharmacist, who counseled the patient and encouraged them to seek care. That patient went to urgent care, had lab work done, and—after years without seeing a doctor—was diagnosed with and treated for Hepatitis C. Stories like that help technicians see the real value in the activities we’re asking them to participate in. It’s about the difference they’re making in people’s lives, their families, and their communities.” -

Lupe Govea, Walmart

7. Keep an Eye on Compensation

The skills your best technicians develop through your programs and sponsorships will make them attractive candidates for jobs at other organizations. To retain them, you might be in competition with other hospital systems, educational institutions, retail chains, independent health care providers. It’s a good idea to monitor salary ranges along the career paths you offer.

In Summary

The way to improve retention in your pharmacy technician workforce is to use the hiring process to identify potential employees looking for a career, not just a job, and then nurture your best technicians with career

guidance, advanced credential options, mentorships, expanded responsibilities, and the full range of company benefits.

[Boxed Quote:] *“Your value is in the job you do, not just the title on your license.”*

— Julie Lanza, Beth Israel Lahey Health

TRC Healthcare’s Pharmacy Technician Learning and Practice Suite: From First Day to Career Growth

TRC Healthcare can help you build a technician workforce you can count on. **The Pharmacy Technician Learning and Practice Suite** gives your technicians a fast lane to readiness and a ladder for growth—helping you hire smarter, onboard faster, and retain longer.

From pre-hire aptitude assessments and Pharmacy Technician’s University to certification prep, ongoing CE, and advanced practice training, the Suite equips technicians for success at every stage of their career.

With one integrated solution, you can streamline onboarding, certification, compliance, and CE—reducing training time, improving retention, and ensuring consistent performance across every location. **One solution, one contract, complete visibility.**

Ready to build your own pipeline of certified, career-ready pharmacy technicians? [Learn more about Pharmacy Technicians University.](#)

