



This document reflects 2023 Camp Insights Survey responses related to the following societal trends:



Note that respondents rated each societal trend using the following prompt - **Please rate the extent to which the societal trend below creates significant opportunities or challenges for your camp over the next 5 years** – using a 1 to 5 scale where **1 = Not Significant** and **5 = Very Significant**. *The full list of trends and their ratings can be found in the appendix of the full [2023 JCamp 180 Camp Insights Report](#).*

In addition, respondents were asked to share areas of both strength and growth in their efforts related to these trends as well as a question related to **Managing workplace expectations with Gen Z summer staff**. This document summarizes the responses camps reported – we hope these ideas help other camps as they determine how to best respond to these societal trends.

A major challenge for camps is managing seasonal staff, especially counsellors. This shows up in the survey with the third rated trend “*Pressure on young adults to earn income and build their resumes*” and fourth rated trend “*High levels of anxiety and mental health challenges amongst summer staff.*” Both these trends have been consistently in the top 4 highest rated trends since this survey began in 2019.

We also received many responses to a new question: *As we consider our evolving realities, what new solutions or approaches are you implementing or considering in managing workplace expectations with Gen Z summer staff?* This section weaves together the strategies camps are adopting to take on these intertwined challenges.

Attract and retain staff

“Recruiting/retaining staff is at a crisis level for our camp.”

Increase compensation. Recognizing the relatively low compensation of counsellors, in 2022, 65% of overnight camps and 85% of day camps increased staff salaries to enhance recruitment and retention. Camps are continuing to increase compensation for seasonal staff, often “significantly”. Camps are also implementing bonuses to incent desired results, e.g., for returning to camp, years worked, year-round events worked, referrals, performance, attendance, completing the summer. Other perks offered include year-round memberships to organization facilities (gym, pools, tennis, etc.).

Demonstrate value of camp to staff. Camps are looking to communicate to prospective staff (and their parents) why working at a summer camp is such a valuable and important experience. This is being accomplished by highlighting the skills acquired as a staff, including time management, conflict resolution, program design, child development and more.

Assist staff in enhancing their resumes. Camps also are directly assisting staff with their CVs, including providing “bullet points” to highlight transferable skills from their work at camp and offering workshops on resume development. A number of camps have created and then advertised new position titles to strengthen their resume credibility.

Develop staff skills useful in the marketplace. In addition to helping staff appreciate the skills acquired in their role, some camps are directly investing in further enhancing skills transferable to the general marketplace. This is done through “offering mentoring from camp professional community and coaching services” along with leadership development throughout the summer. “We are configuring camp as a resume builder/learning experience.” Some camps specifically mentioned implementing programs like [e21](#) to help staff develop and gain what they want out of the camp experience.

Connect staff to employers. In order to help staff get jobs, camps are “creating network[s] to connect campers to board members, alumni and other adults” to provide “exposure and career mentorship opportunities in various fields.”

Create internships. Perhaps, of greatest value to staff, many camps also are leveraging board, alumni, local federation, and community networks to create internships before camp. While there have been successes in this approach, many are also finding challenges in securing sufficient quality opportunities that motivate staff. Some camps are working with universities to incorporate university time/credit. Others have pursued grants meant to incent employers to take on mentoring/shadowing/internships with minimal outlay on their parts.

Hire international staff. Reflecting challenges in finding local talent, many camps hire international staff, both from Israel and beyond. These are typically more expensive and have greater turnover than current staff.

Support staff well-being

Camps are also doubling down in their efforts to enhance the staff experience, both as a means to retain qualified staff, but also to simply help them have a more enjoyable and productive time at camp, for example through the following.

- “Implementing weekly check-ins to get real-time feedback” and “reaching out to individuals who are struggling”
- Sharing gratitude/shoutouts at least twice/day in staff meetings
- Providing more dedicated “fun” activities and events for staff
- Encouraging staff to do fun things together outside of work and building a stronger sense of community amongst the staff

Critical to success in these efforts is dedicating senior staff time/hiring someone to organize these staff activities/programs/efforts.

Provide reduced/flexible hours. Recognizing both the mental health challenges many staff bring to camp – and the challenges of camp itself – camps are looking to reduce the stresses of counsellor work. This includes creating flexible schedules, shorter contracts (single sessions rather than full summer) and longer intersession breaks. These longer breaks also offer the opportunity for internships or other experiences during the summer to help bolster their resumes. Camps are also alleviating work pressures through adding “floating staff to relieve staff when needed”, reducing hours during the day and providing more time off during the summer.

Increase the number of community care and mental health professionals and training to support staff (some of the same ones also supporting campers). Training also is being enriched to help “counselors prepare better for dealing with their campers,” and to be better at “self-care.” These initiatives directly help staff themselves and also ensure they are able to better support campers.

Strengthen Staff Human Resources Management. Camps are strengthening their staff recruitment and intake processes. This includes carefully explaining staff responsibilities and supports prior to hiring, and once hired “being clear about expectations.” Camps are also helping staff “understand the importance of “self-care” and recognize their own potential to overcome adversity while “holding them accountable in a healthy way.” A number of camps have implemented more active supervision of summer staff, including frequent performance reviews throughout the summer.