



AION

LEADERSHIP

SUMMIT



Hiring That Supports Operations

Strategic Talent Acquisition Priorities for 2026

Supporting growth through proactive recruiting,
smart hiring, and employee retention

Presented by Don Christino
VP of Talent





2025

A Year of Transition for
Talent Acquisition at AION

Building an Internal Hiring Engine

From outsourced recruiting to operational partnership

What Changed

Moved from 3rd-party recruiting to a fully internal TA team

Weekly regional meetings with Operations

Expanded requisition capacity

What This Means for You

Faster Communication

More Accountability

Stronger Partnership with Regionals and Sites



Your Hiring Business Partners



Lindsey Herdeg

Eastern Markets

Eastern PA, NJ, DE, and MD

Danielle Short

Midwest Markets

Western PA, OH, IN, VA, and MD



What This Means for You

Clear contact. Faster decisions. Stronger partnership.



2026

Trends and Challenges

The Hiring Reality

Shortage of Qualified Candidates
Aging Workforce and Retirements
More Competition for Employees
Increased Hourly Wages

Strong candidates have choices
We must compete on more than pay



Why Join AION?

Competing for Top Talent in 2026



Recent Success
and Anticipated Growth

Clear Advancement Path

Leasing → LM → APM → PM

AION is Investing in
Learning and Development

Sell Yourself!

**Top performers choose environments where
expectations are clear and growth is visible**



Recruiting is an Ongoing Effort

Interviews are a Path to Additional Candidates

“If hired, who would you want to bring with you?”

Generate Referrals from Current Employees

Leveraging LinkedIn

Building Pipelines before Vacancies Arise

Moving from
Reactive to
Proactive Recruiting

Reactive Recruiting

Proactive Recruiting

Employee Retention



Why is Employee Retention so Important?

Turnover Is Not a Staffing Issue, It's a Business Risk

Raising the Hiring Standard in 2026



Interview Guides and Training

New Interview Guides

Regional Trainings

Not just hiring for Today



Interview
Guides

Every hire impacts team stability, resident experience, and revenue.

Proactive Retention

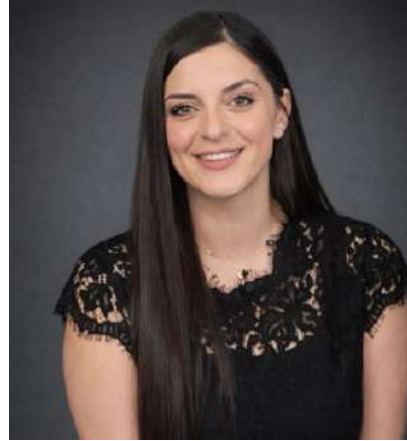
Employee Onboarding Experience

Invest in Current Employees





Michael Horton,
VP of Service Development



Nada Stephenson,
VP of Learning & Development



Deqa Husein,
Sr. Regional Learning &
Development Specialist



Robbie Cunningham,
Field Learning & Development
Specialist

AION Learning & Talent Development Team



Supporting the Field as We Grow

2026 Operational Support Priorities

What Support Looks Like When We Scale

- Clear expectations for how work flows between office and service
 - Consistent guidance during acquisitions, transitions, and go-lives
 - Practical direction when priorities compete
 - Reinforcement that helps teams operate the same way across markets



From Offer Letter to Operational Excellence

- Structured onboarding that builds confidence in the first 90 days
- Role-based training aligned to operational standards
- Advancement readiness support for key transitions:
 - Leasing Consultant → Leasing Manager
 - Leasing Manager → Assistant Manager
 - Assistant Manager → Property Manager
- Leadership skill development tied to performance expectations
- Internal growth strengthens retention, succession, and site stability
- ***Growth should be prepared, not reactive.***

Making the Work More Visible

What transparency looks like



Office and service both manage more than what's visible



Missed context causes frustration and delays



Understanding the full scope improves collaboration



Staying Aligned When Plans Shift

What matters most during transitions and delays

- **Service focuses on safety, diagnostics, and execution**
 - Work is prioritized based on readiness and risk
- **Office leads resident communication and coordination**
 - Expectations, updates, and follow-up stay clear and consistent
- **Managers keep teams aligned when timelines change**
 - Updates are shared early so plans can adjust without rework



One Property, One Business Plan

The standard we are reinforcing



Availability decisions reflect service readiness

Commitments are made based on realistic turn timelines



Leasing and service stay aligned on unit priorities

Teams focus on the same units, in the same order



Managers keep plans aligned across teams

Office and service operate from one shared plan



Service Is the Product

- Service isn't just a department, **it's the experience residents renew for.**
- Every interaction shapes how residents experience AION:
- Speed
- Respect
- Clarity
- Ownership
- The Development Center helps teams build these habits **on purpose, not by chance.**



The AION Service Standard

We coach to one standard, across every market

-
- Respond quickly and communicate clearly
 - Fix it right the first time
 - Document cleanly (tickets, notes, photos)
 - Escalate early when risk appears
 - Leave the unit better than you found it





AION Development Centers: A Foundational Investment

- First-of-its-kind learning centers at AION
- Purpose built to strengthen Service Operations
- Designed to support:
 - Core skills
 - Core tasks
 - Policy and procedural consistency
- Leveraged as a centralized development resource across teams.
- Supports smoother operations, which helps improve retention across service and office teams

Built for Real Work, Not Theory

- Hands-on environments built around real service work
- Scenarios mirror what teams face on-site every day
- Practice happens before pressure hits the property
- Supported by industry-aligned certifications and partners
 - EPA
 - HVAC
 - Electrical
 - Plumbing





Systems + Service: No Gaps

The Development Center reinforces how systems support the work

- Tools don't create service, people do.
- Systems help keep work visible and connected.
- RealPage workflows → accurate status and follow-up
- Leo 24/7 Inspections → consistent findings and action
- Mobile execution → cleaner closeouts
- Handoffs → fewer dropped balls between office and service

Service and Office Move the Same Work Forward

- Office teams manage resident communication and leasing around those timelines
- Service collaboration with onsite teams drives unit turns and move-in readiness
- Alignment reduces rework, repeat follow-ups, and frustration
- When timelines shift, both teams absorb the impact



Operational Readiness During Growth

- **Support begins when teams take over a property.**
 - Clear guidance and priorities are provided as operations begin
- **Clear sequencing around system and process changes**
 - Teams know what to focus on first and how changes roll out across office and service
- **Role-based training reinforced through real work**
 - Training is strengthened based on what teams are actually doing day to day
- **Continued on-site and virtual support during stabilization**
 - Support stays in place while teams adjust and operations settle

• *What changes for onsite teams in 2026*



SUPPORTING REGIONALS AT SCALE

Expanding Support Across the Portfolio

Direct support for regionals across markets, built into how we operate

Consistent expectations and shared language across regions

Structured support for new regionals as they step into the role

Reinforces VP onboarding efforts with operational alignment

Made possible by leadership with direct regional experience

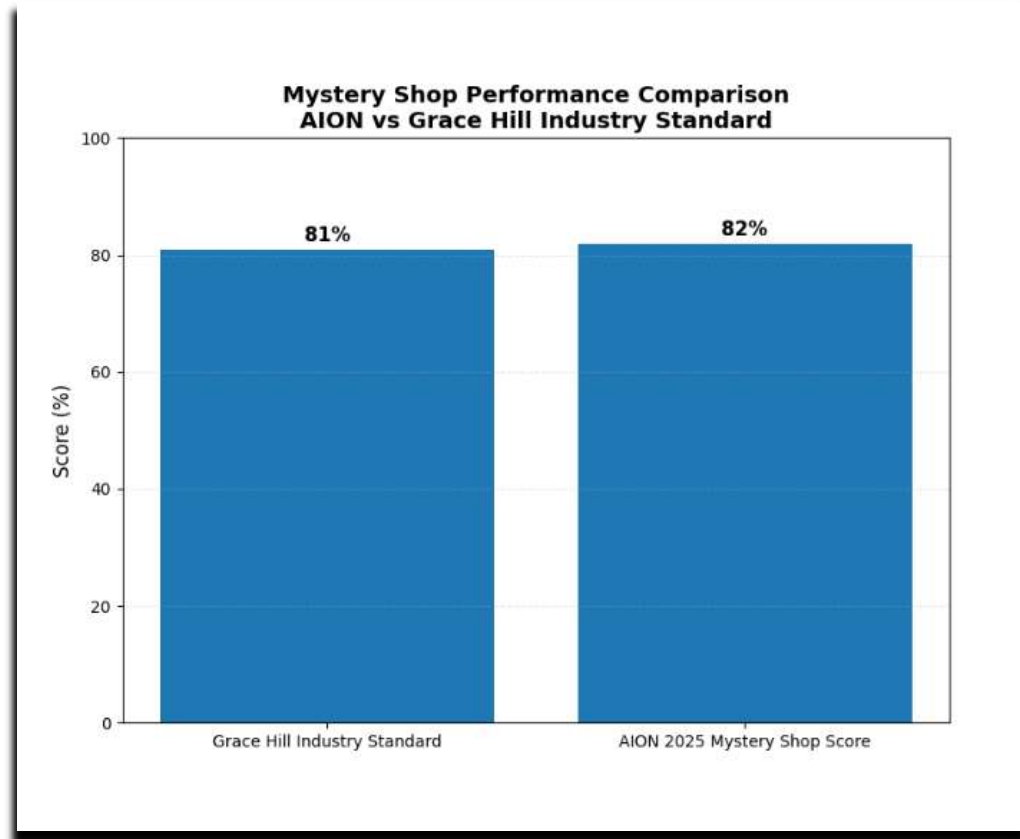




Using Performance Insight to Drive Consistency

- Visibility into how expectations show up across markets
- A consistent way to see what's working, and where teams get stuck
- Used to identify patterns and gaps, not to single out individuals
- Guides where support and reinforcement are most needed

Mystery Shop Insights into the Prospect experience



- **AION exceeds the industry benchmark of 81% for Onsite Non-Recorded average shop score at 82% for 2025, up from 77% in 2024.**
- Portfolio-level mystery shop performance across 2025
- Results exceed or align with industry benchmarks across shop types
- Insights inform targeted development priorities
- Portfolio view reflects a mix of onsite and recorded shop types, with emphasis on onsite interactions due to their direct impact on the resident experience.



Bringing Real Scenarios Into Training

- Interactive workshops tied directly to mystery shop insights
- Real scenarios used for:
 - Role-play
 - Reflection
 - Skill reinforcement
- Teams are encouraged to ask:
 - **“Was this done the AION way?”**
 - This closes the loop between data, training, and execution.



What This Enables in 2026



More consistent
execution across
markets



Better prepared
frontline teams



Scalable training as
AION grows



Clear development
pathways



Cross-functional
Development Advisory
Board guiding priorities





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