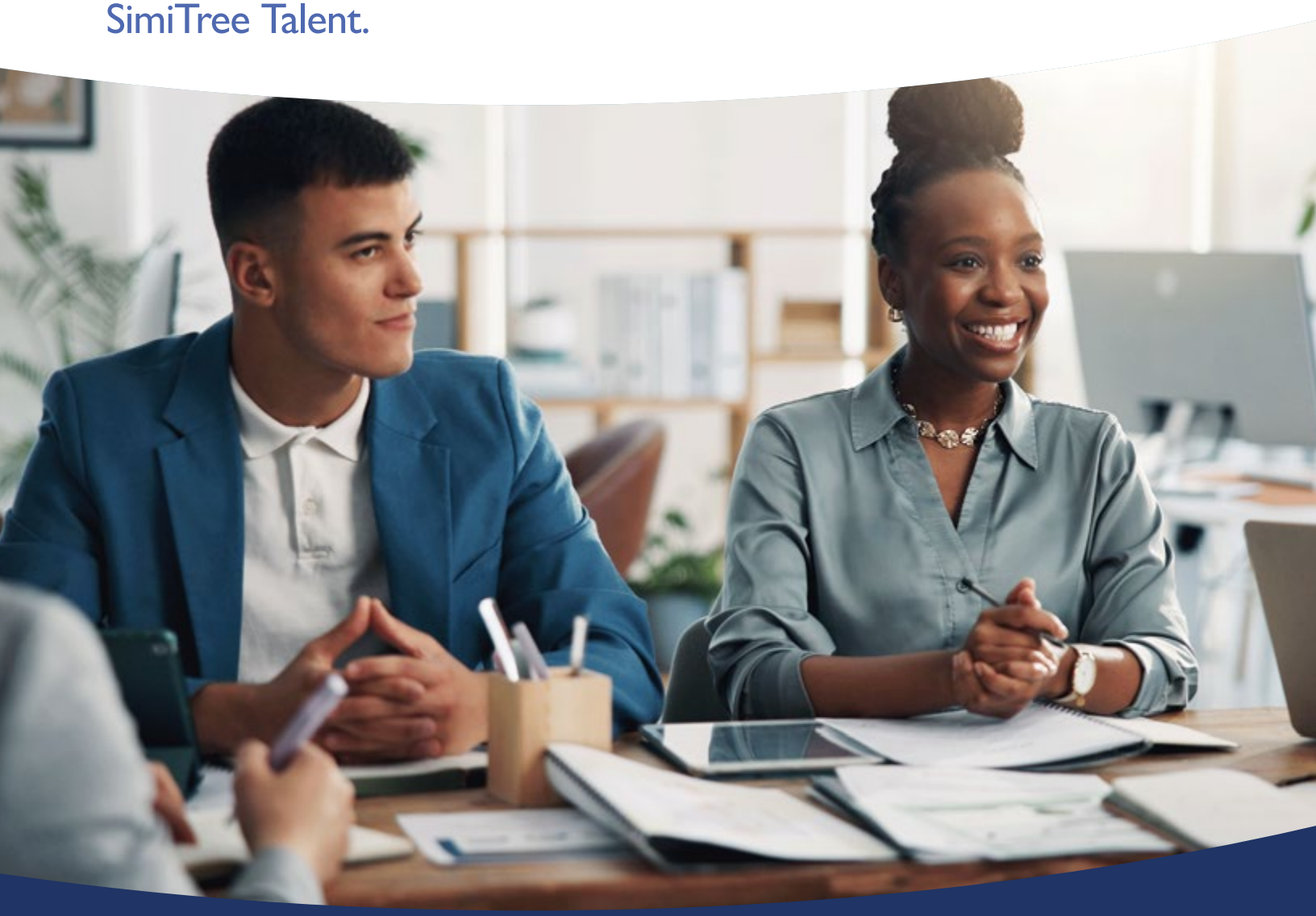
SimiTree

Case Study

Stabilize, Grow, Hire Right: How VNS Health Partnered with SimiTree for Interim Hospice Leadership

How VNS Health kept its hospice program growing through an unexpected leadership gap with interim leaders from SimiTree Talent.



When VNS Health faced unexpected turnover in its hospice leadership, it could not afford to let operations stall. Its hospice program was in the middle of a period of rapid growth, and the organization needed experienced nursing leadership in place quickly. VNS Health turned to SimiTree Talent for interim leadership that could step in, stabilize operations, and keep the team moving forward.

For Brenda Riordan, Senior Vice President at VNS Health, overseeing home health, hospice, and care management, the decision paid off. *"I don't know that I would have done anything differently, because it really went so smoothly,"* Brenda shared. *"We really couldn't have done it without the two of them."*

WHEN LEADERSHIP TURNOVER CAN'T WAIT

Brenda's portfolio at VNS Health is substantial: a home health agency with a census approaching 7,000, a hospice program of about 1,500, and a medical care at home organization that supports the VNS Health plan through annual wellness visits and a palliative care management program. Most of SimiTree's work focused on hospice, a team that had been growing tremendously.

Then came unexpected hospice leadership turnover. As an occupational therapist by background, Brenda recognized the program needed experienced nursing oversight, and it needed it quickly. VNS Health faced pressing questions:

- How do we stabilize hospice operations immediately after an unexpected departure?
- Where do we find experienced nursing leadership on short notice?
- How do we keep growing without rushing a permanent hire?

"We had some unexpected hospice turnover, and so we knew we could reach out to you to get some interim leadership pretty quickly to help stabilize," Brenda explained. *"One of the biggest factors was really getting knowledgeable leadership in place pretty quickly to help support running operations."*

QUALIFIED INTERIM LEADERS IN WEEKS, NOT MONTHS

SimiTree Talent drew on its broad network of experienced operators to present two candidates within the first couple of weeks. When one didn't meet VNS Health's requirements, SimiTree turned around another candidate within a couple more weeks. After reviewing three to four candidates in total, VNS Health placed two experienced nurse leaders.

"They were amazing during that time," Brenda said. *"It speaks to the partnership."*

Skills alone weren't the whole story. Brenda points to culture fit as the hardest part of bringing in any leader, and one interim leader in particular brought strong quality expertise while diving right into the VNS Health culture. The hospice team accepted her as part of its leadership team, and she became so integral that she ultimately joined VNS Health permanently.

2 WEEKS

to present the first qualified interim leadership candidates after an unexpected hospice departure

"That's probably the hardest part, the culture fit in an organization," Brenda noted. *"The team really accepted her as a leader, as part of the leadership team. So it was great from both the skill set perspective as well as the culture perspective."*

IMPACT AND MEASURABLE RESULTS

When a senior leadership role sits vacant, Brenda says, operations tend to stop or slow down as the leadership team drops a level. Interim leadership kept VNS Health's hospice program from losing momentum, and the results followed:

- **Sustained Growth** with hospice census growing by roughly 400 during the interim period.
- **Rapid Stabilization** with qualified candidates presented within the first couple of weeks.
- **Experienced Clinical Leadership** through two seasoned nurse leaders, one serving about six months and the other nearly a year.
- **A Permanent Leadership Addition** when one interim leader joined the VNS Health team.
- **Steady Quality Performance** through the rollout of the HOPE assessment.

VNS HEALTH & SIMITREE BY THE NUMBERS

400
hospice census growth during the interim period*

2 WEEKS
to present the first qualified interim candidates*

2
experienced nurse leaders placed, with one joining VNS Health permanently*

"The return on investment was well worth it to be able to keep operations growing. In that interim period, we grew our hospice census by around 400."

**Results reflect VNS Health's specific experience. Individual results may vary based on location, scope of engagement, and resource availability.*

BUYING TIME TO HIRE THE RIGHT LEADER

Interim leadership did more than fill a gap. It gave VNS Health the room to make a deliberate permanent hire instead of a rushed one. One interim leader completed her contract after about six months, while VNS Health extended the other. In the meantime, the organization could take the time to vet future leaders properly.

"What that also allowed us to do was to be able to hire the right leader and take the time to make sure we could vet future leaders," Brenda explained. *"Having that person join our company created stability, and that growth really happened during that time. It's given us a really great foundation."*

That flexibility matters in a tough market. New York has one of the lowest hospice utilization rates in the country, which makes the pool of experienced hospice leaders small and the competition for them intense.

"It's a very competitive market, especially for leadership," Brenda said. *"Building a bench takes significant effort. Succession planning is really, really important."*

VALUE BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

The timing of the engagement brought an added benefit. The interim leaders arrived just as the HOPE (Hospice Outcomes and Patient Evaluation) assessment was rolling out, a major change for hospice quality reporting. The interim leader serving in a quality role brought the industry expertise VNS Health needed to navigate the transition.

"We were implementing the interim leadership right when the HOPE assessment was rolling out," Brenda recalled. *"We might have fallen backwards on that, but we've maintained really strong performance on the HOPE assessment. Had we not had that support, we might not have been where we are today."*

LOOKING AHEAD: A FOUNDATION FOR CONTINUED GROWTH

With permanent leadership now in place and its hospice program on a strong footing, VNS Health is well positioned to keep growing. Asked whether she would work with SimiTree again, Brenda didn't hesitate.

"I would absolutely work with you again in the future. It was a very seamless process," she said. *"I can't say enough about the two candidates that we worked with, and thank you for allowing one of them to become part of our team."*

SEE WHAT SIMITREE CAN DO

SimiTree Talent provides experienced interim leaders who can step in quickly, stabilize operations, and keep organizations growing while they find the right permanent fit. Backed by a deep network of seasoned healthcare operators, SimiTree helps home health and hospice organizations turn leadership gaps into opportunities.

Ready to see how SimiTree can support your organization? Contact us today to start the conversation.



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Your success is our mission. Let's achieve it together.

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