Strategies to Address the Talent Shortage
Anyone who’s tried to hire great talent knows all too well the talent shortage continues. With unemployment low and baby boomers retiring in more significant numbers, employers are looking for new ways to get and keep great employees. To be optimally effective, an organization’s talent strategy must be multi-faceted, addressing both the attraction of new talent and the retention of productive workers.

Key organizational strategies for addressing the talent shortage include:

- Build the talent supply
- Determine “find” vs “build” aka Teachable Fit
- Find new access to your talent supply
- Mitigate the demand for new talent

STRATEGY #1: BUILD THE TALENT SUPPLY

Employers focused on growth cultivate future pipelines of talent. For some employers, local high schools and even middle schools provide rich opportunities to connect with future employees. Presentations, internships, one-day job shadows or on-site tours can help to introduce students to a new employer and maybe even a new career.

In addition, think about how to extend the impact of an initial presentation or meeting by offering visible support to school teams or charity drives, or supporting contests or scholarships. Remember, simply making the introduction doesn’t guarantee job interest. What is it that will appeal to the group you’re targeting – your products, where they are used, your company’s brand, career paths, flexible work schedules etc.?

STRATEGY #2: FIND NEW ACCESS TO YOUR TALENT SUPPLY

Employers are making headway increasing access to talent supplies by creating innovative outreach programs both in terms of the populations targeted and the specific conversations held. Veterans may represent a terrific talent group to your organization. One key will be outlining how their military-learned skills might transfer to your organization. For example, a Geospatial Information Technician in the Army may find her skills translate well to your jobs in technical diagrams, budget management or process analysis. The key is to assist in that translation.

In addition to veterans, specifically targeting women, disabled individuals or other underrepresented populations can provide you great sources of talent. Plus, don’t overlook your local community or technical college. What type of relationship/visibility do you have there? Could the institution help you promote available internships or include you in job fairs or other days of learning?

To build your talent supply, consider external perceptions of your organization’s brand. Every interaction someone has with your organization – viewing an ad, accessing a website, talking with an employee or your help desk, driving past your building’s exterior, reading about your organization’s news etc. – contributes to their impression of your brand. That brand can either make it easier or harder to recruit the talent you want. Think about all the touchpoints someone might have with your brand and if their experience aligns with your desired brand.

“One thing we work with clients on is how to position their jobs. Just because a “Grade 3 Assembler who can work second shift” is needed doesn’t mean that’s going to appeal to viable – and often passive – candidates. Where’s the hook? What would I as an employee get to do? It’s important to think about the job as an offering and how you would market to your ideal candidate.”

– Amelia Hinson, VP Recruiting, Manpower NA

STRATEGY #3: DETERMINE “FIND” VS “BUILD” AKA TEACHABLE FIT

To some degree, employers cannot find replacement talent because the skills deemed as required are not present in large numbers. Finding a replacement for “Joe” who has 30 years of experience with an individual just like him may not be realistic. ManpowerGroup pioneered the concept of “Teachable Fit” or hiring and promoting those who may not possess all the necessary technical skills but do have the right mindset, aptitude and capability to develop into the position – in essence their Learning Quotient. The question becomes which core competencies are required, which are teachable and how will you enable that knowledge transfer to occur? Pull jobs apart to understand where you can be flexible and where aptitude can fill in for proven experience. For example, maybe specific mechanical knowledge isn’t as important as analytical aptitude and a desire to learn. If so, you might also expand where you find such talent – sports car clubs? Technical schools? Aircraft enthusiast groups?
STRATEGY #4: MITIGATE THE DEMAND FOR NEW TALENT

How does your organization reward, recognize and promote the growth of its current employees? Investing in existing talent can generate enhanced productivity and decreased turnover. Plus, it can serve as a terrific proof-point of employee investment to potential candidates. Learning and development opportunities are regularly cited as key strategies for employee engagement. Promoting a learning environment, offering on-the-job training and nurturing creative exchanges can mitigate the need for new talent and cause current talent to spread great word-of-mouth endorsements.

Manpower has identified the gap between employees aging out and a workforce not yet ready to take their place as the “double squeeze.” To boost the efficacy of junior employees, employers may want to look at enhanced management programs, mentoring programs with senior employees, group projects with both junior and senior employees and offering senior employees flexible work schedules rather than retirement. Identifying those critical senior employees, having conversations about their motivators and outlining win-win strategies can keep you from scrambling later.

Another tactic to lessen the need for new talent is applying flexible workforce models, adding temporary help when you need to ramp up. This model can enable your high performers to stay focused on those areas that maximize their input, while providing the organization sufficient agility to handle spikes in demand.

Strategies to Address the Talent Shortage

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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Considerations/Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Build the Talent Supply</td>
<td>Alignment with local high schools, middle schools: presentations, internships, job shadowing</td>
<td>What is the brand of your industry, your organization within this group? How can you stay connected beyond the initial encounters?</td>
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<td>Find New Access to a Talent Supply</td>
<td>Veteran focus</td>
<td>Identify the local military liaison organizations in your community. How can you help veterans map their skills on to your jobs? Could you do this “live” as well?</td>
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<td>Underrepresented population focus</td>
<td>Women, people of varied ethnic/racial backgrounds, disabled people may be great sources of talent. Again, try to identify organizations that connect with these groups.</td>
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<td>Local community or technical college partnership</td>
<td>These institutions can serve as a source of visibility and talent. In addition, might the school integrate apprenticeships with your organization into certain courses of study or use your senior employees as lecturers?</td>
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<td>Determine Find vs Build aka Teachable Fit</td>
<td>Aptitude vs. Experience</td>
<td>Pull apart key jobs and determine which skills must walk in the door, which you can train and how you’ll close the gap. Involve senior employees in the conversation.</td>
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<td>Mitigate the Demand for New Talent</td>
<td>Knowledge transfer</td>
<td>Have active programs for logging and passing on key knowledge. This can engage existing talent and help bolster the knowledge of current but more junior employees.</td>
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<td>Onboarding programs</td>
<td>Onboarding isn’t just the first day or week. Having a multi-month program to get new hires up to speed can help retain good talent and get them up the performance “S-curve” faster.</td>
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<td>Succession management</td>
<td>Sudden departures can cause a scramble to bring in identical talent. Identifying successors, and their knowledge/skill gaps, can bolster the skills and engagement of existing talent.</td>
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<td>Retention programs</td>
<td>Having a fully fleshed out retention program is important for your entire workforce, but particularly those individuals you don’t want to lose. What are their key motivators?</td>
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<td>Flexible work models</td>
<td>Flexibility, in terms of hours, location (on-site vs remote/at home) and duties can be attractive to both senior and junior employees. In addition, temporary workers can help address spikes in demand, providing additional workforce flexibility.</td>
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<td>Training and development</td>
<td>Most employees want to see progression in their skills and most candidates want to work for an organization that actively assists in that progression. What are your core programs? Do your employees know about them? Do you highlight employees who have applied their learnings and expanded their careers with you?</td>
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“Addressing the Talent Shortage starts with looking internally at the top performers you want to retain and the high-potentials you want to grow. How can you best address their motivators while making best use of what they have to contribute? That’s exactly what we do at Manpower.”

– Kip Wright, SVP, Manpower NA
CASE STUDY: MITIGATING TURNOVER

**Issue:**
Many companies grapple with “missing middle manager” syndrome. CenterPoint Energy was no different. A clash in leadership and management styles became evident when managers from the Baby Boomer generation began overseeing Gen X and Y employees. The company experienced higher than desired turnover rates at 3-month, 6-month and one-year intervals.

**Solution:**
CenterPoint Energy created a positive onboarding process and a generational training curriculum—a two year mandatory program for new leaders or new employees that focuses on multigenerational issues of the changing workforce. In addition, the organization started a recognition and rewards program called Energized by You (EBY). The robust program provides management the ability to closely monitor the use of all reward mechanisms to ensure all employees are treated consistently and that funds are used for maximum benefit. The outcome has been a more engaged and satisfied employee base and decreased attrition.

Addressing the talent shortage can’t be handled via a quick fix. The most effective plans will be multi-faceted, addressing both the attraction and retention of employees.