



Skills Gap

4 Tips for Recruiting in Manufacturing

Tam Harbert | Mar 01, 2017

What You Need to Know

Many executives fear the skills gap is growing.

Strategic alliances and partnerships can lead to productivity and skills training.

Modernity is a selling point for companies.

Solutions to help you attract the best and brightest in the midst of the skills gap.

While opportunities abound, filling jobs in manufacturing is no easy task. The skills gap that exists in the industry threatens competitiveness collectively and individual companies specifically. Some 82 percent of the executives who responded in a **2015 survey** by the Manufacturing Institute and Deloitte said they thought the skills gap would impact their ability to meet customer demands, and 78 percent said it could affect their ability to implement new technologies and increase productivity.

The shortage is across the board, although machinists and operators are “by far the biggest deficiency,” says Erik Kessinger, managing partner of Lucas Group’s manufacturing practice, who disclosed that his clients simply “cannot find enough skilled machinists to fill their open positions.”

Follow these steps to finding the best and brightest talent.

Create Strategic Alliances

Partnerships with local trade and technical schools can be effective, but what’s even more resourceful is when companies band together. **The National Association of Manufacturers** suggests creating an alliance with other regional manufacturers to create a larger employment pool and advocate for long-term solutions, which can garner additional attention from local government and educational institutions.

The National Association of Manufacturers Task Force on Competitiveness & the Workforce published “Overcoming the Manufacturing Skills Gap: A Guide for Building a Workforce-Ready Talent Pipeline in Your Community.” It states that the natural competition among manufacturers is often set aside to

address this shared, urgent need. When alliances are formed, companies can focus disparate efforts and move the community from discussions to solutions.

Recruit Veterans

“In the military, young people get trained in skills like machining and operating highly technical equipment, which are very transferrable to the civilian sector,” says Kessinger. He suggests developing relationships with nearby military bases. You can also reach candidates by participating in local job fairs targeting veterans or working with a transition-assistance program for military personnel.

Develop Leadership-Training Programs

Fortune 500 manufacturers do this all the time, but now midmarket and smaller manufacturers are starting them, too, Kessinger says. These programs identify rising young talent (people with two to three years of work experience) and move them through all aspects of the business. Over two to four years, the candidates experience the supply chain, the manufacturing floor, sales and other areas, which allows both the employer and the young employee to discover where talents are strongest.

Launch a Campaign

Young people can overlook manufacturing as a career choice because they think only of coal and iron-riddled factories with declining opportunities and harsh working environments. They need to be informed that modern manufacturing uses cutting-edge technology like robotics, cloud computing and 3D printing.

Companies like Cleveland’s Lincoln Electric Holdings Inc. use virtual reality to test potential students’ welding abilities while demonstrating the company’s sophistication as an industry innovator. Others have used online videos and smartphone apps to entice younger workers.

While small-business owners and executives may be easily distracted by the minutia of their daily struggles, it’s never too late to start planning for the future. Don’t let the skills-gap shortage leave your company in the dust; figure out ways to form alliances, go where skilled personnel already are and passionately promote the industry.

Key Takeaways

- Publicizing information about cutting-edge technology like robotics, cloud computing and 3D printing can make modern manufacturing more attractive.
- Develop in-house leadership-training programs.
- Forming business alliances can help you find skilled personnel who are already in the industry.