

The blueprint for hiring **MANUFACTURING TALENT**

▶ ▶ ▶ **CHECKLIST**

The world of manufacturing is changing rapidly – and so is the talent required. With the large-scale departure of baby boomers from the workforce (2.6 million over the next decade, according to Deloitte), addressing the widening talent gap should be top priority.

Taking a proactive approach to how you hire is essential. This surge toward Industry 4.0 and workplace digitization is the perfect time to transform your talent function. Attract candidates with the skills you need today and help them gain the skills you need for tomorrow.

Nurture plant management talent

Plant management roles are in short supply. To narrow this talent gap, emphasize internal mobility programs. Evaluate upskilling and reskilling opportunities for your existing talent, so the next generation of workers can grow beyond assembly roles. Use this checklist to guide you:

Take inventory of your employees.

Work with HR to catalogue your workforce. Are people stagnating and not being promoted? If so, you may have a career progression issue, or understaffed HR or talent acquisition function without the resources to measure and nurture employee potential.

Evaluate your supply chain.

Could a manager be overlooking future talent problems for today's supply chain issues? Unfortunately, this is all too common. Supply for higher skilled workers isn't keeping pace with the demand and it will only get worse if you avoid it. It's time to actively seek opportunities for internal employees to fill the pipeline.

Do you have a reward system in place?

Employee recognition and appreciation goes far. Rewarding innovation is crucial to reducing attrition. When it comes to candidates, quality attracts quality. Living and breathing a culture of recognition will draw quality candidates to you over time.

Consider your location

Due to talent supply challenges, companies are thinking about locations more strategically. The virtual environment has opened opportunities for roles not required to be on-site, but the issue remains for hourly workers due to high turnover.

■ Is location leading to rejected job offers?

Factoring in what candidates value most will help you determine how to make an offer more appealing. Getting regular employee feedback, especially during exit interviews, will help you identify the reason they left – so you can learn and iterate.

■ Pinpoint where skilled workers are.

You may need to reconsider your facility locations to capture more highly sought-after talent. Working with a talent partner will give you in-depth market research and insights around your workforce, including where they're concentrated.

■ Have you considered virtual positions?

There are many managerial and corporate roles that can operate virtually. This opens you up to a larger talent pool and one that may possess more future-looking skills.

Offer upskilling opportunities

For lower-skilled employees, upskilling is essential to retaining them. The purpose of refining career pathing is to ensure the skills you're helping employees develop align with the skills necessary to thrive in Industry 4.0. Investing in your people is just as important as the newest technology.

■ Map out your roles.

What opportunities are in place for internal mobility? Consider every position, from entry-level to the executive suite. These paths will differ, especially for specialized skillsets or niche roles in management. Think beyond traditional career paths when examining potential.

■ Consider ongoing training and certifications.

This gives workers active opportunities to level up their skills. Additionally, you'll be able to identify high achievers who volunteer for these extra courses and professional certifications.

■ Survey employees regularly.

Ask them what would be helpful in creating a career path. This includes what their interests are toward management or more technical roles. Consider a quarterly net promoter score (NPS), as it goes a long way in honest, anonymized feedback.

Align to digital transformation

Technology alone doesn't transform manufacturing companies – the harmony between tech innovation and talent does. Balancing the tried-and-true lean processes with necessary investments in human capital (e.g., skills training) will prove fruitful.

■ **Is talent equipped to accelerate your company's innovation and vision?**

To truly transform, you must first start with people. Is everyone – internal and external candidates – empowered to make suggestions and become changemakers?

■ **Concentrate efforts on human-centric policies.**

While machines are crucial for speed, without the proper talent, you'll quickly be outpaced in process and method. Bells and whistles aren't everything unless people know how to use them properly.

■ **Deploy programs to enact change.**

Change doesn't happen without programs in place to encourage it. If there are multiple plants, have a plan of action that inspires collaboration to challenge the norm. This requires collective commitment to excellence and innovation every day.

■ **List out must-have skills for the next five years.**

Does your current workforce possess the skills required to lead you into the next manufacturing revolution? If not, it's time to look at your learning and development initiatives and connect the dots.

Hire diversity

Strategic recruiting is about hiring the right people – and that includes diversity. Hiring diverse candidates is shown to improve innovation at companies, and manufacturing is no exception. Diversity introduces new ideas, methods and perspectives, which will help you keep up with the Industry 4.0 developments on the horizon.

■ **Present diversity stats and market research.**

A diverse workforce is a dynamic one. How diverse is your organization at present? If it's lacking, people will notice. Enacting a plan to increase diversity fosters a culture of belonging. It's quickly become a top priority to candidates and organizations alike.

■ **Consider a role dedicated to diversity.**

This places responsibility on someone to make inclusion and belonging a top priority in your company. Empowered with budget and resources, it's more likely actionable change will happen. Take a pledge on diversity as a sign of good faith and put a plan in place to make progress.

Bridge talent gaps

With skilled workers retiring and current workers lacking skills necessary for progression, succession planning has been a widespread challenge. Now's the time to address the talent gap as it will only get wider as time passes. (We can't expect AI to save us, either! This gap far exceeds the benefits of automation and technology.)

■ Segment your workforce.

To account for industry-wide advancements and the future skills necessary to succeed, bucket your recruitment efforts per role and based on supply and demand. This strategic approach must be tailored to your company.

■ Do you have any early education initiatives?

Consider sponsoring programs that provide education to otherwise unaware groups – this brings manufacturing to light as a fulfilling career path. It also positions your company as a thought-leader to underserved groups that may not have otherwise had exposure to this career option.

■ Assess any regional factors.

If you're looking to expand to different regions, varying employment laws bring unique challenges. Between legislative differences and labor laws, you'll want to proceed thoughtfully to establish a strong, long-term employment footprint. Talent experts help strategically position you, so you replicate success anywhere you build.

■ Establish people as your best asset.

Think of talent as a future investment. A revolving door of workers has massive expense, and taking the due diligence to hire engaged, quality talent saves in efficiency and boosts profits. A proper plan to [gain executive buy-in](#) is key to communicating this.

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